

Small Group Meeting Summary: Chains and Business Associations Food Sector Establishments

Food Sector Grease Interceptor Bylaw Review

Meeting Date: September 25, 2018

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1. Background

Metro Vancouver, in an effort to reduce the amount of fats, oils and grease entering the sewer system, is engaging food sector establishments and related stakeholders to obtain feedback on a review of the Food Sector Grease Interceptor Bylaw (the bylaw).

Specific areas of interest and exploration included:

- Effectiveness of the current bylaw
- Challenges associated with meeting bylaw requirements
- Educational initiatives that might improve awareness, understanding and compliance with the bylaw

Metro Vancouver recognizes that changes to the Food Sector Grease Interceptor Bylaw (the bylaw) could have an impact on stakeholders and is committed to delivering a responsive, transparent stakeholder engagement program. A variety of forums are being used to learn about stakeholder issues and interests related to the bylaw. Information collected during the engagement period will inform the bylaw review. Results and recommendations will be reported back to stakeholders and the Utilities Committee and Greater Vancouver Sewerage & Drainage District (GVS&DD) Board at the end of the process.

Small Group Meetings are being hosted to support a discussion of factors inhibiting compliance and the special considerations of stakeholder groups with unique interests or characteristics.

2. Notification

In August 2018, Metro Vancouver issued invitations to engage in the bylaw review, by email and post, to over 10,000 Food Sector Establishments and other stakeholders within Metro Vancouver. Invited stakeholders responded to Metro Vancouver by email to confirm their interest. Those confirming their interest and availability were assigned to the appropriate stakeholder meeting.

3. Small Group Meeting

Chains and Business Associations

Date & Location

Tuesday, September 25, 9:00 a.m. – 10:57 a.m.

Metro Vancouver – 28th Floor Committee Meeting Room
Metrotower Office Complex
4730 Kingsway
Burnaby

Participants

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Dustin Fowler	General Manager, Boston Pizza Aldergrove
Johanne Tsotsos	Director Engineering, Westin Bayshore
Peter Van Tongeren	Owner/Operator, McDonalds
Brad McLeod	
Charles Powell	
Michael Cyr	President, PH Restaurants LP
Joy Roque	Senior Project Manager, Design Construction, White Spot
Terry Chiu	Director Design & Construction, White Spot
Mai Van Tran	Chief Engineer, Listel Hotel
Welbert Choi	Executive Chef, Forage Restaurant
Ian Tostenson	President, British Columbia Restaurant Food Association
Frank Alexander	Project Manager, Fresh Slice

Presenters & Support

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Tom Sadleir	Program Manager, Public Involvement, Liquid Waste Services Metro Vancouver
Linda Parkinson	Program Manager, Source Control, Liquid Waste Services, Metro Vancouver

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Marlene Fuhrmann	Permitting Specialist, Environmental Regulation and Enforcement, Metro Vancouver
James Smith	Environmental Contamination, City of Vancouver
Jan Pezarro	Partner, Lucent Quay
Kirsty Dick	Manager, Creative Services, Lucent Quay (Facilitator)
Galen Aker	Communications Coordinator, Lucent Quay (Recorder)

4. Presentation

Metro Vancouver presented the following to provide context for the bylaw review:

Engagement Process – Tom Sadleir

- Purpose of the bylaw review
- Engagement objectives
- Timeline

Background – Linda Parkinson

- Metro Vancouver management of the region’s wastewater
- Metro Vancouver’s Source Control Program
- Effects of fats, oils and grease on infrastructure
- Description of current bylaw

Bylaw Enforcement – Marlene Fuhrmann

- Working with municipalities to identify “hot spots”
- Inspections to date
- Common violations
- Fees

5. Feedback

A series of discussion topics were used to obtain feedback on the bylaw review. The following lays out the comments and questions that were raised at the meeting.

Topic 1

What concerns or questions do you have about the current bylaw?

What solutions and ideas do you have to keep fats, oils and grease out of the sewer system?

Have you encountered solutions and ideas elsewhere, to keep fats, oils and grease out of the sewer system?

- In order to prove compliance, is that at cost to the operator? When they are found to be not compliant and a follow-up inspection is required, is that at cost to the operator?
- What is your methodology for taking a sample? How do they determine percentage of fats, oils and grease? What is the output allowed at that sampling point? How are they determining fats, oils and grease levels?
- Has any of the previous feedback from three years ago been taken into consideration for this review?
- The same issues as in previous meetings remain: retroactivity and technical aspects.
- Is Metro Vancouver flexible to the language of the bylaw? Is grandfathering or retroactivity ever going to be discussed?
- When meeting with municipalities are you meeting with plumbers and other audiences?
- In previous meetings with other stakeholders, did you openly talk about retroactivity and expect existing businesses to renovate their establishments to be to code?
- The same questions have been repeated at each meeting, the audience and team have been different each time. Industry wants to help Metro Vancouver reduce fats, oils and grease in the system but needs to be from a place of partnership.
- Is there something happening anywhere else that is working?
- Other municipalities are copying Metro Vancouver and enforcement is going crazy. Despite massive investments it's not stopping the problem. Size of grease interceptor isn't everything. Work with what the restaurants have. For instance, dairy products, does every coffee shop need an interceptor? That's a lot of coffee shops.
- The review needs to be realistic about it and develop a grandfather clause.
- The primary concern is retroactivity. Other than Metro Vancouver staff, no one at the municipal level is approaching this bylaw retroactively.
- Metro Vancouver considers it a bylaw, it's really a building code issue.
- Go back to the start of the original introduction of the bylaw.
- Existing language needs to be rewritten to allow for a grandfather clause. Asking restaurants for major renovations is not feasible.
- Methodology for determining sizing needs to be reviewed
- Engineers and plumbers tell us that the sizing requirements are not feasible.

- Existing restaurant operations are difficult to close down for renovations to come up to standard for the grease interceptors.
- Concern with the cost of complying with the bylaw. We have 75 existing shops, cost of compliance not feasible.
- There are no guidelines or certifications for pump-out companies. What is their methodology for determining fats, oils and grease percentage?
- The food service establishment industry needs a certification and regulation program for haulers.
- Each company is different in the reports they provide; FSEs are looking for standardized records.
- Daily maintenance is important.
- Nothing has changed in three years, industry has written letters to Metro Vancouver regarding the issues of retroactivity, certification of pumpers and haulers, utilizing industry resources to educate itself and technical issues. Industry will do the right thing if a proper partnership is developed, current exercise appears to be aimed at justifying existing bylaw.
- An example of the lack of understanding of technical requirements from all levels of the industry: When asked to provide clarity on how to calculate rate of flow, the response was to turn on every tap that was entering the grease interceptor and that's how to calculate it. Metro Vancouver at the time of adoption of this bylaw said they picked up CSA standard. How should rate of flow be calculated?
- We are looking for awareness and clarity around how to determine when a grease interceptor is full.

Topic 2

What is special or unique about your business and sector?

What would make it easier for you to be compliant and keep fats, oil and grease out of the sewer system?

- Does connecting a grease interceptor to a dishwasher make sense?
- Pouring 165° water into the grease interceptor is dissolving the fats, oils and grease and making its way down the drain, so it doesn't make sense to connect dishwashers.
- What is Metro Vancouver's perception of profitability of a restaurant? Industry profitability is within 10-12% and there are labour challenges right now. Inspectors need to develop awareness and approach inspections with the intent of coming to a solution that works for both parties. Major renovations are insensitive to the economics of the industry. For instance, liquor inspectors consult with industry to help find solutions.
- Has there been any outreach to different languages and cultures? For a large portion of the industry, English is not their first language
- When is the new bylaw going to be finalized?

- Renovations and new builds are being asked to install 150-gallon grease interceptors because the dishwasher needs to be connected. Regular restaurants only need 100-gallon, which leads to many problems with digging out structural slab to properly install grease interceptor, which leads to a huge costs.
- Added a smaller grease interceptor in addition to the 3 currently installed as a result of challenges with city. Continual challenges with sizing.
- Detergents act as degreasers, connecting a dishwasher using detergent and attaching it to the item that is supposed to degrease does not make much sense and could be leading to fats, oils and grease entering the system.
- Previous experience suggests that you can't connect dishwasher to grease interceptor.
- I don't think everyone understands what sizing means, some establishments have no knowledge of grease interceptors and have been in operation for years. Had the restaurant been in operation, the renovations would have equaled 3-4 weeks loss of business. The business owner of the restaurant before the purchase was not even aware a grease interceptor existed in the facility.
- Enforcement and education go hand and hand. We are here to work together, but inspectors are picking a select few and crippling businesses with expenses. Approach should be to utilize current equipment and how to properly use it.
- Talk more to restaurant owners rather than contractors.

Topic 3

What more can Metro Vancouver be doing to help with education and awareness?

Do you have ideas for training and education tools?

What else might help?

- Information regarding the bylaw for renovations comes from approved contractors
- Clarification on how new renovations were not incorporated into the bylaw standards?
- Grinders are archaic, they only eat knives and forks.
- Marriot is an adopter of digesters and looking to install these in many locations.
- Will enforcement continue throughout this year with the current bylaw? [Yes]
- Is this review focusing on older restaurants? Or restaurants who haven't had any renovations within the last 10 years? It may lead to better results focusing on older restaurants.
- How does Metro Vancouver define a hot spot?
- What are the names of the politicians on the Utilities Committee? Would like to understand how the committee works?
- Do we get to see a draft of the bylaw? Will the Board of Directors vote on this?
- How does the new committee get appointed?
- Most of industry is scared of Metro Vancouver inspectors because restaurants are being asked to be up to modern-day code. Owners are afraid that they will be exposed to huge costs to upgrade to be compliant.
- Language of the inspectors should change. Inspectors should be asking appropriate questions, like about the business's maintenance program.

- Information on how to be compliant needs to be simple and straightforward, three pages of material edited down to two paragraphs.
- Engage industry to help communicate the changes.
- Need to fix the bylaw first then work on the education piece.
- Not interested in marketing bylaw as it stands right now because of how it is written. Needs simpler language.
- To reach small restaurants, coordinate a mailout with partnership from industry association.
- Lack of consistency with standards across restaurants; a consistent standard is needed for all enforcement officers.
- Currently working with a bylaw that is broken. Industry cannot create an education plan around something that is broken. Metro Vancouver needs to make something that is workable. Intention is not to pollute the system, but fix the bylaw first.
- Lack of understanding with the process of how Metro Vancouver works with municipalities.
- Emphasis needs to be on education of staff of proper disposal of grease.
- Most cooks don't know the requirements for grease interceptors, they don't know proper disposal procedures or any of the processes regarding fats, oils and grease.
- Outreach program similar to organics ban where there is an education piece on what is fat, oils and grease.
- The organics ban is a good example; you have to give an incentive to businesses rather than enforcement with confusing rules.
- There appears to be a disconnect between City and Metro Vancouver inspectors. Lack of communication between enforcement agencies.
- Without the adoption of retroactivity Metro Vancouver won't get industry buy-in and will be viewed as an opponent. Any building 10+ years is out of compliance and the owner/operator won't engage with the bylaw.
- Suggestion that a business cannot gain approval permits until compliant with bylaw, based on timeline to become compliant (13-18 weeks to get permit in Surrey).
- Retroactivity is important to industry stakeholders, there needs to be more engagement with industry to improve compliance with the bylaw requirements.
- Give relief to industry, just do maintenance inspections and a moratorium on rest of inspections. Pause enforcement of the bylaw while going through review.
- Look at maintenance of grease interceptors and education programs. Can get more compliance while Metro Vancouver is reviewing the bylaw.
- Instead of requiring renovations during bylaw review increase the frequency of pump-outs.
- Release bylaw requirements with industry stakeholders to test to see if the bylaw can be effective. There needs to be some relief to the industry.
- Continually have a different hauler each pump out and a different percentage of fats, oils and grease is given each time. Frequency of pump-outs is difficult to determine because the percentage is different each time.
- A better approach to improve compliance with the bylaw is to engage with industry associations to influence change. The ultimate goal is to keep fats, oils and grease out of the sewer. Not working with industry stakeholders will prevent that goal from being realized.
- The issue with dishwashers is whether they should be connected - cannot wait until 2020 for a decision to revise and it should be a science-based answer. Can 160° water with chemicals be

pumped into the grease interceptor and have it work effectively. The answer to these questions should supersede the review process.

- The current letters that are being circulated are scaring people. It would help industry to trust Metro Vancouver if the letters stopped.
- Get clear on bylaw requirements, then get industry to help distribute and educate
- Need trust between industry and Metro Vancouver.

6. Next Steps

Metro Vancouver will analyze all questions and comments from the small group meetings and identify key themes to inform the development of discussion topics for the Working Group, which will meet 5-6 times in 2019. Metro Vancouver will recruit Working Group members from the varied stakeholder groups that participated in the Small Group Meetings. The Working Group will be guided by a Terms of Reference.

